

Federal Statistics: Children and Family Composition

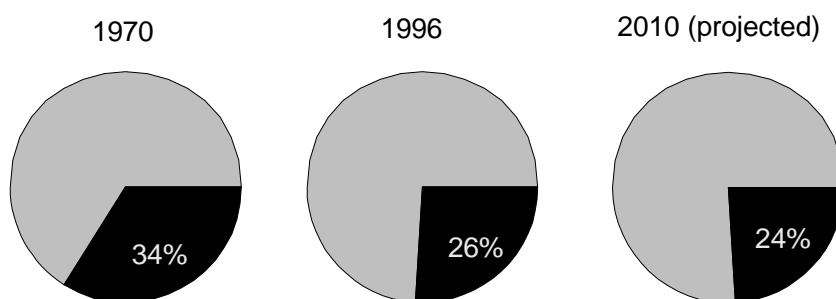
Children and Family Composition in the United States

Today's U.S. children under age 18 live in different family structures than children did during the 1970's. Families have changed, and these changes have implications for the circumstances of children. Now, children compose a smaller percentage of the population than they did years ago. More children are living in single-parent families, often headed by a never-married parent. These different family structures influence the economic well-being of children.

Children as a percentage of population:

Children now compose a lower percentage of the population. In 1970, 34 percent of the population was under age 18; in 1996, 26 percent was. By 2010, 24 percent of the population will be under age 18. Families having fewer children and people living longer are reasons for this trend.

Percent of U.S. population under age 18

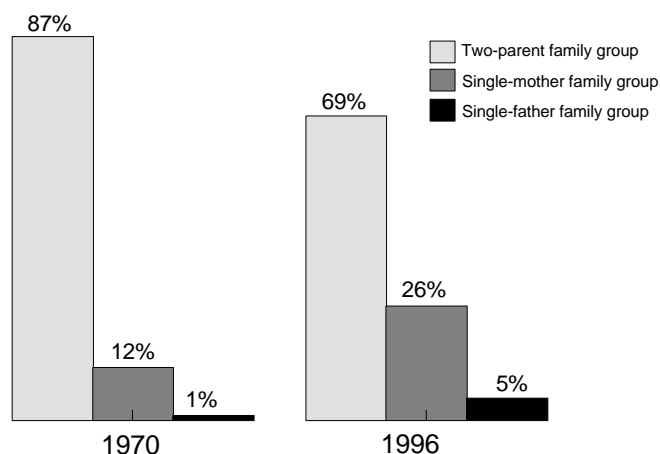


Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Trends in the Well-Being of America's Children and Youth '97*.

Children and family type:

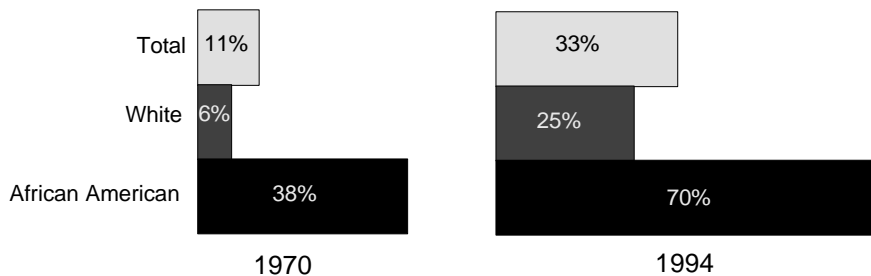
More children are living with one parent. In 1970, one-parent families with children accounted for 13 percent of all families with children. By 1996, this figure increased to 31 percent. More of these one-parent family groups are headed by the father: 1 percent in 1970, compared with 5 percent in 1996.

Percent of U.S. two-parent and one-parent family groups with children



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1997, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1997* (117th ed.).

Percent of all U.S. births to unmarried women, overall and by race

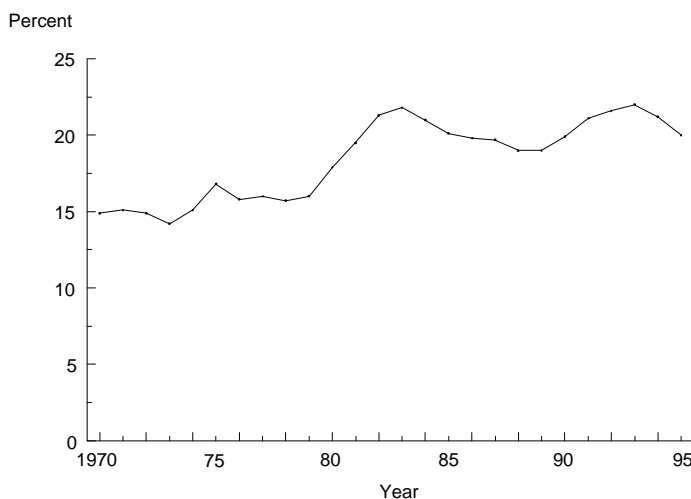


Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1997, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1997* (117th ed.).

Children and their mother's marital status:

A greater number of single-parent families are being formed through births to unmarried women than through divorce or widowhood. Births to unmarried women accounted for 11 percent of all births in 1970, compared with 33 percent in 1994. The rate is particularly high for African American women. In 1994, 70 percent of all births to African American women were to unmarried women.

Percent of children in the United States in poverty over time



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1988 and 1997, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1988 and 1997* (108th and 117th eds.).

Children and poverty:

Single-parent families typically have a much lower income than do married-couple families. The increase in such families is one reason for the increase in children living in households where the income is below the poverty threshold. In 1970, 14.9 percent of all children were poor. By 1995, this figure rose to 20 percent.